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SUBJECT: FUTENMA RELOCATION: NAGO MAYOR'S HIGH-WIRE ACT GETS SHAKEN

REF: A) NAHA 0027; B) NAHA 0024

11. (SBU) Summary: As events appear to be building toward a "final decision" by the GOJ on the specific location and configuration of the Marine Corp Air Station (MCAS) Futenma relocation facility (FRF), the personal negotiation track between Defense Minister Fukushima Nukaga and Nago Mayor Yoshikazu Shimabukuro has become the avenue for seeking local acceptance for the FRF. While Okinawan FRF proponents are very satisfied with this track, opponents are not because they fear Nukaga and Shimabukuro may reach an agreement - their worst nightmare. In the last two days, tough remarks in Tokyo attributed to Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi, Nukaga, and Japan Defense Agency (JDA) Administrative Vice Minister Takemasa Moriya have put more pressure on Nago to agree to the FRF plan. This public perception could very well make Shimabukuro's negotiation task more difficult by limiting his ability to make concessions. End summary.

Nago Mayor in the Driver's Seat

12. (SBU) Newly elected Nago Mayor Yoshikazu Shimabukuro has

become Okinawa's lead negotiator on the FRF revision plan and the lead target for reformist criticism. The reason for both may lie in the fact that almost all parties recognize that if Nago officials agree to an FRF proposal it will make it hard for those who dislike the plan to reject it. Many Okinawans also feel that if Nago reaches an agreement, it will put pressure on Governor Keiichi Inamine, possibly forcing him to back away from his refusenik stance and if not actively support the plan than at least not actively oppose it. But the Governor's refusenik stance is part of the reason that the GOJ has turned to Shimabukuro during these negotiations, because Shimabukuro is willing to compromise. Shimabukuro has made it clear publicly and privately that he is not rejecting the plan to relocate MCAS Futenma to the Henoko area, but rather he opposes any planned relocation that will put the flight route over residential and business areas.

13. (SBU) With Shimabukuro taking the lead on negotiations, GOJ officials apparently believe there is a chance for progress on the FRF. Shimabukuro told ConGen staff that he received separate phone calls on March 27 from former Foreign Minister Nobutaka Machimura and current Environment Minister Yuriko Koike encouraging him to keep on talking with JDA, but also warning him not to make a "hasty or easy" decision. Both ministers told him that there was an internal battle within JDA on the FRF's location, and that if Shimabukuro kept talking and defending his position there was a good chance he could get enough of what he wants to be satisfied. Koike said she was willing to take responsibility for the environmental issue.

14. (SBU) Nonetheless, Shimabukuro has tried to avoid making a concrete proposal to the GOJ, in line with an Okinawan preference for sitting in judgement of proposals from Tokyo rather than making Okinawan proposals. Sometimes this coyness

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takes on a ludicrous aspect; Shimabukuro told us that for fear of leaving behind a permanent record of what was acceptable to Nago, he described moving the runway more out to sea by using his finger (instead of a pen) to draw a new runway location on a map. Nago City Vice Mayor Bunshin Tsuematsu, however, offered a more permanent manifestation of what the city could accept when he pulled out a map during the Nago City Assembly's question and answer period in mid-March and indicated what areas would be acceptable to Nago. Whatever the method, it is clear that a small shift seaward (on the order of less than 100 meters) is not acceptable to Nago. Shimabukuro told us he had rejected an earlier offer to move the runway 50 meters and is pushing for a 400-meter adjustment towards the sea.

Mayor's Role in Negotiations Causing Some to Squirm

15. (SBU) Shimabukuro taking the lead in the discussions is unsettling to some in Okinawa, but for differing reasons. National Diet member Mikio Shimoji, an opponent of the current "coastal Schwab" plan, told ConGen that Inamine has to take a leadership role in order to expedite the Futenma relocation project, and right now Shimabukuro is working harder than the Governor. Shimoji complained that since the Governor has the authority, he should take the initiative and make the appropriate decision for Okinawa. Leading reformists like Kantoku Teruya are worried that Shimabukuro and Nukaga might reach an agreement and are calling for Governor Inamine to take a leading role - at least as long as Inamine continues to oppose building the FRF at Camp Schwab. Teruya recently proclaimed he was worried about the Governor's isolation and asked for the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) to bring him back into the mix.

16. (SBU) The Governor himself appears concerned enough about his isolation to attempt to repeatedly link his position with that of Shimabukuro, noting that both oppose the "coastal Schwab" plan. What Inamine and the reformists invariably omit, however,

is that while the Governor is unwilling to accept anything outside the original Special Action Committee on Okinawa (SACO) proposal to build a deepwater FRF, Shimabukuro is willing to accept a revised version of the "coastal" plan. The Okinawa Prefectural Government (OPG) is desperate not to acknowledge that Shimabukuro might be on the verge of agreeing to a compromise, especially since if the Mayor cuts a deal then Inamine will be on the spot to either bless it or reject it. What Inamine will do if Shimabukuro reaches an agreement with the GOJ is still unclear. Shimabukuro told Polmil specialist that he believes that despite Inamine's recent statements against considering the Schwab "coastal" plan or any alteration of it, if Nago can achieve a workable compromise with the GOJ, Inamine will, at a minimum, not do anything to stymie the new plan. In mid-March, Inamine told ConGen that during the 1996 SACO process the GOJ had had close contacts with the OPG, Nago City, local communities, and fisherman's associations to get a local consensus. In contrast, Inamine said he was "frustrated and confused" because of the lack of adequate justification from

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the GOJ for the "coastal plan." OPG Senior Counselor for Military Affairs Reiji Fumoto told ConGen in early March the OPG would be willing to look at an alternative plan if the GOJ proposed one. Also former President of LDP Okinawa and party advisor Kenjiro Nishida told Polmil chief in mid-March that he believed Inamine would not oppose an amended FRF plan if the Nago City mayor accepted it. Nishida said that at some point, the Governor will officially accept the amended plan because it will eliminate the danger to Ginowan posed by Futenma.

17. (SBU) The local reformist media is deeply unhappy with Shimabukuro's leading role because they too fear a Nukaga-Shimabukuro agreement. In an editorial on March 27, the Ryukyu Shimpo warned Mayor Shimabukuro against entering the "sumo ring" of the GOJ, noting that the GOJ did not plan to compromise. The editorial stated that the "true feelings" of Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi could be seen in his repeated statements that he had no intention of modifying his fundamental position on Futenma relocation. Also, the "true feelings" of the central government were reflected in statements by senior Defense Agency officials who said that they would not compromise even once with Okinawans because it would cause locals to expect further concessions. The Okinawan Times editorial urged Shimabukuro not to compromise easily and to avoid actively proposing his own alternative plans to the central government.

FRF to be Decided By Locals, But Who Defines "Local?"

18. (SBU) A large stumbling block for the GOJ has been trying to satisfy all the diverse Okinawan opinions, which even many Okinawans acknowledge is a Herculean task. Inamine admitted in his March discussion with ConGen that Okinawan opinions on the FRF are not unified and that he is in a difficult position, noting "we Okinawans are facing a difficult phase in the negotiations and I do not have any good ideas on how to resolve this tough issue." LDP Okinawa General Affairs Committee Chairman Toru Oda complained to ConGen that Okinawan Diet members' lack of unity caused them to be unable to take a strong stance with the GOJ on the Schwab FRF plan.

19. (SBU) Nonetheless, the definition of who is "local" has become a hot topic, with those favoring Futenma relocation to Henoko satisfied to limit "local" to only Nago citizens, or even only ward residents near Henoko, while opponents insist all Okinawans are equal stakeholders in the issue. In early March, Shimabukuro helped the GOJ by publicly commenting that the "local communities who have a right to pass judgment on FRF" was limited to just three of Nago's 55 wards, or about 5 percent of the Nago area population. Inamine told reporters on March 26 that "local" meant all Okinawans, not just Nago/Henoko residents. The same day on TV Asahi's "Sunday Project"

(equivalent to "Meet the Press") Diet member Mikio Shimoji echoed the Governor's position, but was contradicted by former JDA Director General Shigeru Ishiba, who asserted that "local" means Nago residents only. The Okinawan media, of course, insist

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that all Okinawans need to pass judgment on the FRF plan and on March 30 both papers highlighted a planned rally by Nago's neighboring town of Ginoza as evidence of an expansion in "local concern." The papers gave prominent space to the rally against the shallow water project set for April 4 and the Higashi Village Chief statement that "More than just the fact that the flight route will pass over us, we want to make the 'appeal' that we also should be considered citizens of communities surrounding Henoko and, as such, should be consulted on the matter."

If All Politics "Local," Then Shimabukuro has Political Backing

¶10. (SBU) Shimabukuro does have local electoral backing for his negotiations according to an NHK exit poll done after his victory in the January Nago mayoral election. The poll showed that 59 percent of respondents who backed Shimabukuro either accepted the plan to relocate MCAS Futenma to Camp Schwab or some modification of the plan. Also, Shimabukuro was supported by 60 percent of voters ages 20 to 70 years old. Among LDP and Komeito supporters, Shimabukuro's support rose to 80 percent.

Nago Putting Hope in Nukaga and Yamasaki; Moriya Remains A Source of Distrust

¶11. (SBU) In late March, Shimabukuro told ConGen officials that he thinks very well of JDA Director General Nukaga and that Nukaga seems to be sincere and undertaking a genuine effort to achieve a compromise with Nago. Separately, LDP Okinawa Secretary General Kosuke Gushi told ConGen officials that LDP

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Security Research Council Chairman Taku Yamasaki personally assured him in mid-March that Yamasaki would be directly involved in drafting and then pushing a revised FRF plan. The revised plan would presumably incorporate local requests that the facility be located further out on Henoko Point, if not all the way into the shallow water off Camp Schwab.

¶12. (SBU) Shimabukuro, however, told us he had "no use for [JDA Administrative Vice Minister] Moriya." He also noted that someone, possibly Moriya, is giving Nukaga "misinformation," telling Nukaga that some wards near Henoko (Abu and Mihara) "approve" of the current Camp Schwab plan. After hearing this report, the chairman of the Kanucha Bay Resort (near Abu) met with Nukaga to personally tell him that he did not want to have aircraft flying over his resort. One of the Nago City Ward chiefs also confided to Polmil officer he was worried that Moriya was intervening and preventing the "true feelings of Okinawans" from reaching Koizumi.

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Tough Words from Tokyo Putting More Pressure on Shimabukuro

¶13. (SBU) News stories on March 29 extensively reported a March

28 meeting between Koizumi, Nukaga, and Moriya, in which Koizumi called for minimal concessions and for proceeding with the current plan even if Nago refuses to agree. Press backgrounders by Moriya after the meeting emphasized that now is the "last chance" for Nago to agree to the Camp Schwab plan. Perhaps not coincidentally, Mayor Shimabukuro promptly postponed his scheduled March 29 meeting with Nukaga, citing the need for prepare for former Nago Mayor Tateo Kishimoto's funeral on April 12. The funeral itself could become a venue for some Tokyo-Nago dialogue, since both Nukaga and Aso have announced they will attend. Note. Shimabukuro is chairman of the Kishimoto funeral committee. End Note.

14. (SBU) Comment: For the past two weeks, Shimabukuro has been engaged in a high-wire act in his negotiations with Nukaga. Not only is he trying to avoid an open break with Inamine, he is facing increasing media-led calls for him to break off the talks altogether. To the degree that Nukaga is able to project an image of understanding and openness to reasonable compromise, Shimabukuro feels sufficiently protected to continue the discussions. The most recent hard-line, uncompromising statements out of Tokyo, however, will undoubtedly make Shimabukuro's job more difficult if they destroy the public perception of understanding on Nukaga's part and thereby limit Shimabukuro's room to maneuver. End comment.
REICH